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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN PREVLAKA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its resolution 1093 (1997) of 14 January 1997, the Security Council decided, inter alia, to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP) until 15 July 1997. In the same resolution, the Council called upon the parties to adopt the practical options proposed by the United Nations military observers for the improvement of safety and security in the area as referred to in the report of the Secretary-General of 31 December 1996 (S/1996/1075) and requested me to report by 15 April 1997 on progress made in implementing those practical options, in particular regarding the freedom of movement of the military observers throughout the entire area and respect for the demilitarization regime. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

II. THE SITUATION IN THE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION OF OBSERVERS IN PREVLAKA

2. With an authorized strength of 28 military observers (see annex), UNMOP continues to monitor the demilitarization of the Prevlaka peninsula and of neighbouring areas in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by carrying out vehicle and foot patrols on both sides of the border. As part of its work, it holds regular meetings with local authorities in order to reduce tension, improve safety and security and promote confidence between the parties. In this context, the Chief Military Observer, Col. Harold Mwakio Tangai (Kenya) held meetings with the authorities in Zagreb, Belgrade and Podgorica during February and March 1997 in order to discuss issues arising from resolution 1093 (1997).

3. While the situation in the UNMOP area of responsibility has been generally stable, tension increased as a result of several developments. In particular, concern mounted in the wake of a substantial increase, beginning in mid-December 1996, in the number of Croatian special police personnel in the United Nations designated zones. UNMOP estimates that the increase amounts to a doubling of the strength of the special police in those areas. Inquiries to both local and national authorities have failed to elicit an explanation of the increase. Also contributing to the tension was the fact that, on two occasions, Croatian heavy weapons were observed inside the demilitarized zone. In February 1997, a three-day exercise by the Yugoslav navy outside the UNMOP area

of responsibility prompted a strong reaction by Croatia, which partly restricted the movement of United Nations military observers on coastal roads inside the demilitarized zone for the duration of the exercise. The following month, the United Nations-controlled zone was violated by a Yugoslav navy missile boat. Croatian police boats also enter the United Nations-controlled zone occasionally.

III. PROGRESS TOWARDS ADOPTION OF THE PRACTICAL OPTIONS

4. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1093 (1997), the parties have made no progress towards adopting the practical options that are part of the procedures proposed by UNMOP in May 1996 to reduce tension and improve safety and security in the area. Long-standing violations of the demilitarization regime described in my last report (see S/1996/1075, paras. 6 and 7) persist. In connection with the proposed practical options, it should be noted that both parties continue to restrict the freedom of movement of UNMOP in the northern part of the demilitarized zone and that access elsewhere is denied randomly and even, at several Croatian positions, constantly. Minefields laid beside routes patrolled by United Nations military observers on both sides of the international border in the demilitarized zone still constitute a hazard to United Nations military observers.

5. In discussions with relevant authorities in Zagreb, Belgrade and Podgorica, the Chief Military Observer has conveyed the new elements contained in Security Council resolution 1093 (1997), in particular the Council's expression of concern at violations that had dangerously increased tension; its call to the parties to adopt the practical options and its request for a report by mid-April 1997 on progress made in that regard; and its call to the parties to cease and refrain from all violations and from military and other activities that might increase tension, to cooperate fully with the United Nations military observers and to ensure their safety and freedom of movement, including through the removal of landmines. The Chief Military Observer has offered specific suggestions to the parties on the lifting of restrictions on the United Nations military observers' freedom of movement and on the removal of landmines.

6. The Chief Military Observer has found no willingness among the parties to take unilateral steps to improve respect for the demilitarization regime in Prevlaka and its neighbouring areas. Although neither party refuses to consider removing minefields or lifting restrictions on the movement of United Nations military observers, both insist that such steps can be undertaken only in the context of a reciprocal arrangement. The experience of UNMOP has shown that the parties' requirement of guaranteed reciprocity makes meaningful progress on the issue extremely difficult, if not impossible.

7. The parties raised various concerns related to the work of UNMOP. In Zagreb, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs objected to the number of visitors to Prevlaka and to certain procedures followed by the military observers. Croatia has also questioned the balance of UNMOP assessments in its reporting. In Podgorica, President Momir Bulatović stated that UNMOP had attempted, with its proposed procedures for improvement of safety and security in the area, to reduce the dimensions of the so-called "Blue Zone", which is part of the demilitarized zone. Progress in adoption of the practical options would be unthinkable until an acceptable explanation of the reduction had been provided. This view is shared by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is, however, the

position of the Chief Military Observer that no revision of the dimensions of the United Nations designated zones was implied in the proposed procedures, which are aimed solely at improving the security and safety of the United Nations military observers and contributing to confidence-building between the parties.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

8. The parties have indicated to the Chief Military Observer that their continuing bilateral negotiations pursuant to the Agreement on Normalization of Relations, signed at Belgrade by Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 23 August 1996, have not yet addressed the Prevlaka issues directly and that there has been no progress towards a settlement of the dispute. In this situation, UNMOP will continue to carry out its mandate, within the existing practical constraints. It will also continue its efforts to enhance security and safety in its area of responsibility and to contribute to confidence-building between the parties.

Composition of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka as at 10 April 1997

Country	Military observers
Argentina	1
Bangladesh	1
Belgium	1
Brazil	1
Canada	1
Czech Republic	1
Denmark	1
Egypt	1
Finland	1
Ghana	2
Indonesia	2
Ireland	1
Jordan	1
Kenya	2
Nepal	1
New Zealand	1
Nigeria	1
Norway	1
Pakistan	1
Poland	1
Portugal	1
Russian Federation	1
Sweden	1
Switzerland	1
Ukraine	1
Total	28